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BT73HE

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Principal Mr. N Watson

8th October 2014

Dear Parent/Staff member,

In December last year we invited all parents to a meeting about having our enrolment and admissions number increased at Forge. As many of you will be aware Forge has been growing in recent years. All schools in Northern Ireland have an 'enrolment number' which is the total number of children permitted in the school. All schools also have an 'admissions number' which is the total number of children admitted to the school in P1 each September.

These numbers are decided by the Department of Education, often when a school is first officially established.

Our official total enrolment number at Forge is 250 and our admissions number for P1 is 36. As the demand for Integrated Education has increased these numbers have become increasingly problematic for us. Our current enrolment is 304 pupils.

For the past eight years the school's Board of Governors have decided to apply for a temporary variation in our admissions and enrolment numbers to allow us to admit all applicants who have an Integrated school as first preference.

The reasons for this are twofold. It allows us to be financially viable. It also means that we are providing an integrated school place for those in the area who want it.

If we had not pursued this policy over the past seven years and instead sought a temporary variation to admit only 30 P1 pupils per year (one full class) there would be approximately 120 children currently at our school who would, instead be educated in single identity schools.

As things stand we need a more permanent solution so that that we can be viable and help ensure that the demand for integrated school places in this area can be met. We want to have our enrolment and admissions numbers changed to allow the school to continue the natural growth we have seen in recent years and become a stable two form entry school.

To have these numbers changed permanently a development proposal must be submitted and approved by the Minister for Education.

As part of the process we are required to hold information meetings for parents, staff and governors. We did this in January of this year and submitted our proposal to BELB.

BELB discussed the issue at a meeting of their board on March 2014 and it is our understanding that some BELB board members requested additional information about the impact our growth may have on other schools in the area. The Development Proposal was not progressed to the Department of Education as a result of these queries and was deferred pending the gathering of further information.

It has taken the intervening period for BELB to gather this information and we have been told that due to this time lag DE have requested that the school hold another set of meetings for parents, staff and governors. These meetings will be a repeat of the previous meetings and would not be necessary had the proposal been progressed in a timely fashion. However, in order to ensure that all of the 'boxes are ticked' and there is no further reason for delay we are holding a series of meetings on Monday 13th October 2014 as detailed overleaf.

I appreciate that this is short notice but it is necessary for us to do this in order to have carried the process out in time for the BELB November Board meeting.

[Email: info@forge.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@forge.belfast.ni.sch.uk)

www.forgeips.co.uk

School Development Proposal Meetings 13 October 2014

Time	Location	Primary Audience
1330	Staff Room	Non-Teaching Staff
1515	Staff Room	Teaching Staff
1830	School Hall	Parents

Please note that while the meetings are scheduled for different groups the content will be the same and you will be very welcome to attend any of the three meetings during which I will outline the reasons for seeking a development proposal, how the process should work and discuss any queries you may have.

We do understand that some parents have already attended what is essentially the same meeting, however, for some parents whose children are new to the school this year it may offer an insight into the development of the school in recent years and looking ahead. It will be useful to us in organising room space etc. if you can call Lisa at the office and let us know if you intend to attend a session, however you can simply turn up on the day.

Yours Sincerely,



Neville Watson
Principal